

**TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AT UNIVERSITY OF
COLORADO BOULDER**

PREPARED BY: IAN MACGILLIVRAY, DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

I. SUMMARY

This item recommends approval for University of Colorado Boulder (UCB) to offer a Bachelor of Science in Strategic Communication.

II. BACKGROUND

COMMISSION AUTHORITY

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review and approval of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is defined in §23-5-129(6)(b), which states that new and modified program proposals shall be reviewed and approved only on the basis of fit with the institution's statutory role and mission.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM

The following is summarized from UCB's proposal:

The strategic communication problems that organizations and society face today require more than just a mastery of technical skills and tools. They require individuals who have mastered a design-thinking process that is grounded in both analytical and creative thinking. Such individuals are often referred to as T-shaped professionals, with a breadth of knowledge that spans every aspect of strategic communication and expertise or specialization in one. In order to develop and train such individuals, existing programs and majors need to be re-imagined and re-invented. To this end, the Department of Advertising, Public Relations and Media Design proposes an undergraduate degree (Bachelor's of Science, or BS) in Strategic Communication with the following three tracks: Advertising, Public Relations, and Media Design. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach and adding elements of design, we wish to reorganize our existing program/courses in advertising and public relations. Majors in strategic communication design will be highly encouraged (and sometimes required) to take classes from other units both within and outside the college of media, communication and information.

Additional information on this proposed degree, unrelated to fit with statutory role and mission, is in Appendix A.

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

This degree supports UCB's statutory role and mission, which states:

(a) The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall be a comprehensive graduate research university with selective admission standards. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall offer a comprehensive array of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado has exclusive authority to offer graduate programs in law. The Colorado commission on higher education, in consultation with the board of regents, shall designate those graduate level programs that are the primary responsibility of the Boulder campus of the university of Colorado. The university has the responsibility to provide on a statewide basis, utilizing when possible and appropriate the faculty and facilities of other educational institutions, those graduate level programs. The commission shall include in its funding recommendations a level of general fund support for these programs. [§ 23-20-101, C.R.S.]

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that UCB's proposed degree is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission, meets Pathways requirements and meets the 120 credit cap requirement for bachelor's degrees. University of Colorado's Board of Regents approved the program at its September 11, 2014 meeting.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve University of Colorado Boulder's proposal to offer a Bachelor of Science in Strategic Communication.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-5-129 Governing boards - performance contract - authorization – operations

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education:

(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create, modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the

institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.

APPENDIX:

Appendix A: Supplemental Information

APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

This supplemental information is unrelated to the proposed degree's fit with the institution's statutory role and mission. The following is summarized from the institution's proposal:

EVIDENCE OF NEED

Employer Demand: The types of jobs we expect our majors to pursue include, but are not limited to, those of art directors, copywriters, account planners, research analysts, account executives, creative technologists, producers, media planners and buyers, account managers, brand managers, social media strategists, graphic designers, game designers, product and package designers, web designers and developers, media relations managers, event planners and public relations specialists. Many industry publications and surveys suggest a growing demand for most or all of these jobs, which fall under the umbrella of strategic communication and design. For instance, a recent survey by U.S. News lists the 100 best jobs based on factors such as employment opportunity, salary, work-life balance and job security, and several of the above mentioned positions feature on that list (web developers and designers at No. 9, research analysts at 21, public relations specialists at 51, event planners at 66, art directors at 76). Glassdoor.com lists average starting salaries for almost all of the above-mentioned jobs as at or above \$50,000 a year. Furthermore, advertising, public relations and game and media design frequently feature on many of the "fastest growing college majors" lists alongside STEM majors. In fact, a recent Bankrate study puts advertising jobs at the top of the list in terms of jobs offering best return on investment, above traditional jobs like those of economists, engineers, lawyers and physicians. See Kim, Susanna (2013), Advertising Jobs Lead List of Careers, Offering Best Return on Investment, ABC News, June 11, 2013 [Online available at <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/top-20-college-degrees-best-worst/story?id=19364365>]

Student Demand: Currently, there are 249 (145 resident, 104 non-resident) students in the advertising program at CU Boulder. We expect to start with that number in the reconfigured major in strategic communication. The addition of courses in design and of more public relations courses should produce a modest increase in enrollment over the next couple of years. By the end of year five, we expect our major to draw at least 375 students in total.

DUPLICATION

The advertising program at CU Boulder has existed for many decades and has an international reputation. Our ad program is considered one of the best in the nation. We have also offered many courses in public relations under the former School of Journalism and Mass Communication and its successor, the Program in Journalism and Mass Communication. The entirely new addition to our degree is the track in media design. Some universities in Colorado, including CU Denver, offer tracks in advertising and public

relations. For example, the University of Northern Colorado offers a BA in Journalism, with Public Relations and Advertising Media as a track. Similarly, CU Denver offers a BA in Organizational Communication and PR. Colorado State University and the University of Denver offer various courses and certificates in public relations. However, there are no degree programs in Media Design either at CU Boulder or any other institution in Colorado. While CSU offers a degree (BFA) in Graphic Design, our program is much broader than just graphic design. Our degree is also unique in that it adopts a design-thinking approach to strategic communication, and our advertising program has been in existence for longer than most if not all others. More precisely, our degree in strategic communication is unique in both its interdisciplinary approach and its emphasis on design thinking. By combining creative thinking and the principles and elements of design with analytical and strategic problem solving, we intend to tackle many of the challenges that businesses and society as a whole face in the 21st century. For example, our track in media design will produce graduates who are grounded in analytical and critical thinking and are capable of producing for multiple screens and platforms such as the web, videogames, smartphones, tablets and virtual environments.